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# IMPROVED COURT PERFORMANCE PROJECT IN ALBANIA

## QUARTERLY REPORT MARCH 9, 2016 – JUNE 30, 2016

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## QUARTERLY REPORT

MARCH 9, 2016 – JUNE 30, 2016

Prepared under the USAID's Improved Court Performance Project in Albania, Contract Number AID-OAA-I-13-0035 / AID-182-TO-16-00001

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**Contractor:**

East-West Management Institute, Inc.

**Disclaimer**

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## TABLE OF ACRONYMS

ADRF	Albanian Disability Rights Foundation
AJJ	Association of Journalists for Justice
ALTRI	Albanian Legal and Territorial Research Institute
AmCham	American Chamber of Commerce in Albania
AWEN	Albanian Women Empowerment Network
BKTF	Together Against Children Trafficking
CEFJSAJA	Civic Engagement for a Functional Judiciary System & Access to Justice in Albania
CEPEJ	European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice
CETJ	Coalition for an Effective and Transparent Judiciary
CILSP	Center for Integrated Legal Services Providers
CETJ	Coalition for an Independent and Transparent Judiciary
CoE	Council of Europe
CMT	Change Management Team
COP	Chief of Party
CRA	Central Records Archive
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAR	Digital Audio Recording
DCoP	Deputy Chief of Party
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EWMI	East-West Management Institute, Inc.
GUC	Grants under Contract
HCI	High Council of Justice
HJC	High Judicial Council
HO	Home Office
IMA	Investigative Media Advisor
IRCA	Institute of Romani Culture in Albania
IT	Information Technology
JuST	Albanian Justice Sector Strengthening Project
JWD	Justice without Delay Initiative
MCAT	Media Content Analysis Tool
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAJB	Office for Administration of the Judicial Budget
OCSAT	Organizational Capacity Self-Assessment Tool
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SOM	School of Magistrates
STC	Save the Children
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## INTRODUCTION

The East-West Management Institute, Inc. (EWMI) is pleased to submit its first quarterly report covering activities for the Improved Court Performance “Justice for All” Project (hereinafter referred to as “the Project”).

USAID signed the Project contract with EWMI on March 10, 2016. On March 17, EWMI submitted a Mobilization Plan, which USAID approved the following day. On March 28, EWMI President Adrian Hewryk, Vice President Mark Dietrich and Project CoP Anne Trice arrived in Tirana to implement start up activities. DCoP Elvana Gadeshi and EWMI representative Delina Fico had already begun the process of seeking office space, setting up key interviews and meetings, as well as securing a Tirana based law firm to assist in establishing EWMI’s official presence in Albania. Key start-up accomplishments included: Introductory meetings with all project governmental and non-governmental counterparts and related justice-sector donor projects were held, in coordination with USAID; a major launching event was organized and held on May 16 at the Tirana Grand hotel; Office space was located, leased, furnished, and equipped; Professional and support staff were recruited and trained on EWMI and USAID procedures; Office policies were drafted and put in place; Outreach materials were developed; EWMI registration in Albania was completed; an EWMI bank account was opened and made operational; and a vehicle was transferred from USAID and registered to the Project. In addition, the Project drafted a work plan and extensively revised the PMP, both of which were approved by USAID (early in the subsequent reporting period). A Grants under Contract (GUC) manual was also prepared, submitted, and approved, on May 19.

In terms of substantive activities, the *Justice without Delays Initiative*, conducted jointly with partner OSCE, was formally relaunched at an event hosted by the Shkodra Appellate and District Courts and was held in the Law Faculty of Luigj Gurakuqi University in Shkodra. Significant progress was also made in forming the justice reform coalition, which will be supported also by an EU funded project being implemented by Save the Children. Activities relating to promoting investigative journalism were delayed due to extended discussions with the Association of Journalists for Justice (AJJ) and staffing changes.

## DELIVERABLES COMPLETED THIS QUARTER:

- ✓ Mobilization Plan drafted and approved;
- ✓ Work plan completed, reviewed, and revised;
- ✓ PMP submitted, reviewed, and revised;
- ✓ GUC Manual submitted and approved;
- ✓ Project launching event held;
- ✓ JWD launched in two courts: Durrës and Kukës District Courts

Details concerning these activities are provided below, tracking the project components and expected results, following a description of project start-up actions.

## START-UP ACTIVITIES

### 1) Developing and Obtaining Feedback for Work Plan

Soon after arrival of the key personnel and home representatives in Tirana, planning and development of the initial work-plan was begun. This included development of individual component activities, expected results and timeframes. During this initial planning period, the project sought the perspective and insight from knowledgeable observers, including USAID, and included individuals with long term experience with and within Albanian justice-sector institutions.

Many days of work planning, interviews and critical counterpart discussions as well as meetings with other donors resulted in a work plan, with key activities, milestones, and resources needed to accomplish each task.

Working under the assumption that counterpart and beneficiary participation and by-in increases the likelihood of success, the project shared the planning process with as many key counterparts and beneficiaries as were available to ensure that the plan is thoroughly supported, understood and desired.

Based on internal review and feedback from USAID the project team and home office worked to refine the work plan, including a significant change in activity year dates. USAID approved the work plan early in the next reporting period, on July 6. The Project's performance-based monitoring and evaluation plan was also revised and approved.

### 2) Locating and Establishing the Project Office

Prior to the arrival of EWMI HO representatives and the CoP in late March, the Project DCoP and Tirana based EWMI representative began the process of locating suitable office space. More than a dozen properties were viewed and considered, and one single property stood out as the obvious choice. Unfortunately, following successful negotiations with the landlord and completion of needed updates to the property, the Project became aware that the property was subject to two tax liens and seizure orders as well as a significant private mortgage. The project determined that it could not lease this property and renewed its search for office space that was not encumbered. The Project ultimately found premises located in the Embassy district which we secured well below the cost of all other properties viewed and considered. The project took possession of the office and began occupying it in early May 2016.

All equipment and furnishings from the JuST Project had been donated to counterparts and as such EWMI – Albania initiated and completed appropriate tender processes to secure furnishings and IT equipment.

### 3) Staffing the Office

At the same time as that the project was searching for and obtaining physical office space, efforts were well underway to assemble the best possible team to run the project. The process of recruitment and selection of qualified staff was greatly facilitated by the number

of qualified candidate's with extensive relevant experience, many of whom had experience with the former JuST program and/or other USAID programs.

Using the staffing pattern contained in the original proposal, the project advertised positions, screened all applicants, and conducted a minimum of three interviews per position. The staff recruitment and hiring process continued throughout the first quarter with a few positions postponed for hiring until such time as they are absolutely needed. Per USAID instructions, EWMI did not fill the proposed Senior Attorney position. The project completed and put in place human resource, employee conduct and travel policies. At the end of the quarter, all critical positions have been filled and candidates have been successfully on-boarded. One position, the IT Manager, remains open and will be filled during the second quarter. The individual selected for this position was the former JuST IT Manager who has significant experience with the DAR system. In the period between JuST close out and the Justice for All start-up, he established his own company with a business model aimed at providing ongoing service and maintenance to the courts for their DAR installations. He also was able to secure a commercial contract with the Tirana District Court and at startup was in the process of negotiating with other courts. This clearly created the appearance of a conflict of interest for both the individual and the Project. The Project will move forward using this individual, or possibly his company, as a consultant and on an as needed basis for DAR related issues only and will employ another individual for all internal IT needs.

#### **4) Project Launch Event**

On May 16, a major event was held at the Tirana Grand Hotel to mark the launch of the Project. USAID Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia (E&E) Thomas Melia, Albanian Chief Justice Zaganjori, and Project COP Anne Trice all spoke, outlining the Project's activities and expected results. The audience included leaders from government, the judiciary, the donor community (including USAID Country Representative Marcus Johnson), the NGO community, and the media from around the country, and received broad coverage on Albanian TV and in the press.



**USAID Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia  
Speaks at the Justice for All Launch event**

**COMPONENT 1: STREAMLINED, EXPEDITIOUS AND TRANSPARENT COURT PROCEEDINGS**

**EXPECTED RESULT 1.1:** Courts perform their functions more efficiently, avoiding unproductive hearings and unnecessary delays.

***Rapid Stocktaking Assessment of Past JWD Courts***

In coordination with our partner OSCE, the Project developed a plan of action for the rapid stocktaking that incorporates the use of the experienced team of data collectors previously contracted by the OSCE. This team has successfully completed the data collection processes for Puka, Tropoja, Durrës and Kukës District Courts. Based on availability and scheduling of new JWD courts, the team will deploy in July to complete the rapid stock taking in all four original pilot courts.

The data collection will honor the methodology of the original assessments done in these courts and will also include the enhanced methodology that better defines the number of cases selected for the random case sample. Justice for All and the OSCE have agreed that, going forward, the volume of cases selected will be determined by both court size and case load with a representative sample of anywhere from 3 -10% selected.

The data collection will result in the production of an assessment report drafted in the same manner as the original baseline report for each court and will allow the Project to determine to what extent the JWD initiative has been maintained, level of success, challenges faced and the response to those challenges. The data collection and subsequent report will also document lessons learned, gather information needed for expansion of the program and to determine where targeted assistance may be needed to reinvigorate the program.

By the beginning of September the Assessment Reports for each of the four courts will be ready. USAID Justice for All Project will take the respective steps in supporting the sustainability of the active case management measures adopted by the courts based on the results of the assessment reports.

Court	Data Collection	Report Production
Kruja	July 7 – 8, 2016	July 11 – 15, 2016
Korça	July 18 – 22, 2016	July 25 -27, 2016
Puka	July 25 – 26, 2016	August 2016
Tropoja	July 28 – 29, 2016	August 2016

During the reporting period, the Project's COP and two court administrators either visited or made arrangements to meet in Tirana with the Chief Judges of the four prior participating courts:

**Status of Kruja District Court:**

At this time the status of the JWD initiative here appears to be well maintained, with on-going support from all judges and court staff; the court is routinely held as an example to other courts interested in successful implementation. The court is approaching two and a half years of implementation and is well poised for an updated assessment to take place.

The judges of the Kruja District Court remain dedicated to JWD and two will participate



as peer mentors in the Lezha District Court JWD workshop in late July. The Kruja judges will share their experiences implementing JWD and will provide direct experience to the Lezha judges within areas such as: Developing the courts action plan and setting reasonable and attainable goals; approaching stakeholders of the court for active buy-in and support; how to measure progress; what challenges were faced and how were they overcome, etc.

### **Status of Korça District Court**

Korça District Court remains an active and loud voice for support of the Justice without Delays initiative. Chief Judge Admir Belishta and Judge Irena Plaku from Korça District Court shared their experiences with the Judges of the Durrës District Court in a workshop held on June 11-12, 2016. Both judges shared extensively their experiences, and both participated actively in the dialogue with the Durrës District Court judges as they developed their action plan for implementation. Judge Belishta, with experience chairing a court very similar in size to that of Durrës District Court, shared his vision of the court on the adoption of the active case management techniques in the Korça Court before, during, and even after the initial project support ceased.



**Chief Judge Belishta at the Workshop for Judges of Durrës District Court - June 2016**

Since that time Chief Judge Belishta has also voluntarily assisted the Chief Judges of Kukës and Lezhë to prepare them in advance for their own workshops and subsequent implementations. The implementation and maintenance of the JWD initiative has reached the two year mark in Korça and a follow-up assessment is needed.

### **Status of Tropoja District Court**

Chief Judge Artan Hajredinaj of Tropoja District Court singled himself out by actively expressing interest in implementing the JWD initiative following the presentation of result from Korça and Kruja District Courts following the National Judicial Conference that took place in autumn 2014.



**Chief Judge Hajredinaj speaks at the Workshop for Judges of Kukës District Court June 2016**

Despite the closure of the JuST Project the Court and OSCE carried forward the implementation in this court and all the steps for the successful implementation were completed. The Tropoja Courts initial results at the end of the 6 month implementation period were extremely positive. Chief Judge Hajredinaj was and continues to be very active and supportive of JWD.

The Tropoja Court is similar in size to Kukës District Court both for number of judges and the workload and for that reason Chief Judge Hajredinaj and the Chancellor of the court

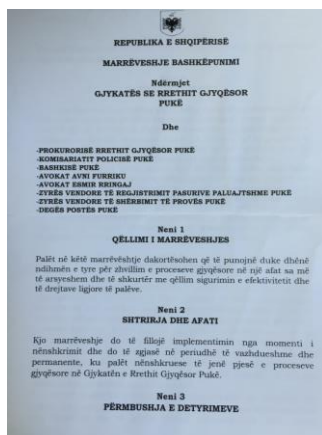
Shkëlzen Mulosmani were invited to and actively participated in the Kukës District Court workshop that took place on June 27 - 28, 2016. They presented the experience of the Tropoja District Court in implementing active case management measures and positively impacted that development of the Kukës District Court action plan.

## Status of Puka District Court

The Puka District Court has struggled to fully implement the JWD program. On April 27, 2016 the Project visited the court along with OSCE and determined that there is renewed collective will among the judges of the court to continue the implementation and the Chief Judge is invested in strengthening the implementation. Local counterparts of the court such as the Prosecution Office, Municipality, Office of the Registration of Immovable Properties, Police, local attorneys etc., were present at the meeting and all signed a



*Puka District Court signing Memorandum of Understanding with interlocutors*



*Memorandum of Understanding between District Court of Puka and its interlocutors*

Memorandum of Understanding with the Court regarding the implementation and their role and expectations. The Memorandum of Understanding provides detailed provisions on active case management measures to be followed by the court and the local stakeholders including: Improving the notification procedures; Improving the procedures for exchanging written evidence and experts' reports; Improving the attendance in person and submission of written evidence by relevant public institutions, in particular the Real Property Registry, Prosecutors and Prison authorities, etc.

Based on the results of the assessment report to be prepared in Quarter 2 Justice for All will map the progress of this court and if needed will prepare a plan of support to assist the court to be successful in implementing JWD.

## Implementation of Justice without Delays in Additional Courts

The project and the OSCE are initially planning to expand the Justice without Delays initiative in three new courts: Durrës District Court, Kukës District Court, and Lezha District Court. The Project COP and court administrators also visited these courts during the quarter, and organized an event to promote the expansion of the initiative.

## Joint Launch Event

In coordination with the OSCE Presence in Albania, Justice for All held a nationwide launch, or re-launch event for Justice without Delays. Held at the University Luigj Gurakuqi in Shkodra and attended by USAID Country Director Marcus Johnson, OSCE Ambassador Florian Raunig, Austrian Ambassador Johann Sattler and Minister of Justice Ylli Manjani the event focused on past successes and future planning for implementation of the JWD initiative in all first instance courts of Albania. The event was well attended by Chief Judges and Chancellor of courts where the initiative has not yet been implemented, as well as by Chief Judges of the Appellate Courts and by the media.

### **Durrës District Court Activities**

The Durrës District Court has struggled with the implementation of the initial JWD program steps but will, as of September 1, 2016, fully implement their action plan with the support of two court clerks who will remain in the court through the end of February 2017.

Data collection for the court was completed in early June 2016 and the courts workshop was held in Vlorë on June 10 – 11, 2016. At this workshop the judges heard from the Chief Judge of Korça District Court and one of his civil judges regarding their experiences developing their own action plan, challenges and successes of implementation and lesson learned. The Durrës District Court drafted a well-informed action plan and established June 17, 2016 as the date of the interlocutors meeting. Unfortunately, that interlocutors meeting has had to be rescheduled for July 7, 2016. Finalization of the hiring process for two court clerks will be completed early next quarter and, as stated above, full implementation will begin September 1, 2016.

### **Kukës District Court Activities**

The Kukës District Court has been a strong proponent of implementation of JWD in their court and has actively participated in and adhered to the schedule for initial activities. The court fully supported data collection, opening the court to the data collectors and ensuring that all needed files were pulled and made ready in advance. The workshop for all judges and key court administration staff was held in Durrës on June 27 – 28, 2016. The court came well prepared, participated actively and openly and were supported in their efforts by the Chief Judge and Court Chancellor of the Tropoja District Court. At the end of the workshop the court had defined significant and meaningful active measures to implement.

Prior to the workshop the court had already sent invitations to all interlocutors to participate in a JWD roundtable on June 30, 2016. This event was well attended, the interlocutors were supportive and active in the discussion and supported the implementation of the courts' action plan. The event was also attended by the Chief Judge of the Appellate Court and he too voiced his support for the program and openly called for it to be implemented in his own court.

Active implementation, support by both OSCE and Justice for All, as well as a fully funded and embedded court clerk will begin in early September.

### **Lezhë District Court Activities**

Initial planning for startup activities is well underway for the Lezhë District Court. Initial introductory meetings were held and the court readily agreed to the implementation plan and methodology. The Court had already received its detailed implementation plan with

associated deadlines and the data collection, baseline report production and workshop will be completed in the first month of next quarter.

**EXPECTED RESULT 1.2: Court sessions take place in courtrooms where the hearings are verbatim recorded and are open to the public.**

***Encourage More Open Hearings and the Use of Digital Audio Recording (DAR)***

Holding open and transparent hearings is fundamental to a well-performing and trusted judiciary. Proceedings held behind closed doors in judges' offices contribute to the public perception that the court system is unfair and corrupt. Proceedings held in open courtrooms with adequate access by the parties and their lawyers, witnesses and members of the public is essential to creating public trust and confidence in the judiciary.

The Project began the development of a call for proposals for a CSO or group of CSOs to conduct monitoring and evaluation of the courts' use of existing courtrooms and the application of the DAR system within those courtrooms. As a part of this process, the Project conducted initial assessments and interviews with various Chief Judges to determine how to best define the RFA and maximize the activities and their results and outputs. In coordination with the EWMi home office the draft RFA will be finalized early in the next quarter, submitted USAID for approval and related activities will span the following six months.

A second activity that follows up on the success of JuST related DAR activities is the design, development and implementation of an assessment of the DAR Central Records Archive (CRA) System activities and status. Working with the former JuST IT manager, the Project team has defined the assessment process and scope and will implement the assessment in the first weeks of the next quarter. The assessment will be conducted using the JuST IT Manager as well as international IT Expert Tim Bates who worked closely with the JuST program to develop and implement the DAR system. The assessment will result in tangible recommendations for improvements to the CRA system to ensure the appropriate back-ups, security and maintenance updates are actively implemented by the courts, MoJ and where applicable to the HCJ and the OAJB. The assessment will be completed by mid-September 2016.

**EXPECTED RESULT 1.3: Public has easy access to the courts.**

No activities to report this quarter.

**EXPECTED RESULT 1.4: Judicial leadership is strengthened and undertakes and active role in the judicial reform process.**

The Project held preliminary discussions with representatives of the School of Magistrates regarding the design of future training programs intended to promote improved judicial leadership.

**COMPONENT CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

The Component Team successfully established a strong partnership with the OSCE to further improve and implement the JWD initiative and anticipates that partnership to grow even stronger over the coming months and years as implementation is expanded to all first instance courts. Challenges for this component were not significant in the first quarter and might best quantified as the positive challenge of being a welcomed supporter and assistance to provider to many. These results in being asked to be of assistance to many willing counterparts and beneficiaries at the same time. In order to be responsive to all requests and to successfully implement all project activities, the Project is exploring the possibility of adding another Court Administrator to the staff. This will be done in line with the planning and work plan production for year two activities.

***Steps for Next Quarter***

Next Steps for this component include the following priorities:

- ✓ Continue JWD implementations in Durrës, Kukës and Lezhë Courts;
- ✓ Initiate JWD activities in Shkodra and Dibër Courts;
- ✓ Coordinate with OSCE on the development and release of the JWD webpage;
- ✓ Explore the options and possibility to automated the JWD data collection;
- ✓ Coordinate with the SoM to review and improve curriculum related to active case management;
- ✓ Coordinate project activities with the EU and COE funded CEPEJ program;
- ✓ Respond as needed to developments with the overall Justice Reform initiative.

## COMPONENT 2: PUBLIC DEMAND/PRESSURE FOR IMPROVED JUSTICE DELIVERY

**EXPECTED RESULT 2.1: A justice sector CSO coalition/network is formed with an established strategy and action plan.**

### ***Formation of a Coalition for an Effective and Transparent Judiciary***

During the reporting period, the component 2 team's efforts focused on supporting the establishment of an issue-driven Coalition for an Effective and Transparent Judiciary (CETJ). The Project worked closely with Save the Children (STC) on this activity as STC has received EU funding to establish a coalition in support of the justice sector reforms.

In collaboration with STC and their supporting partner Centre for Integrated Legal Services and Practices (CILSP), the Project completed the process of consulting groups and individuals committed to improving the performance and transparency of the judicial system in Albania. Furthermore, the Project consulted with organizations that have already worked on the issues of access to justice and legal reform, in the frame of other advocacy coalitions, such as CLCI, ALTRI, Res Publica, IPLS and TILAS. The team also completed the process of consultations with active groups of civil society organizations, which, although not technical legal experts, will be excellent sources of issues related to access to justice and the performance of judicial institutions and actors. These grassroots groups support issues concerning among other things: women rights (domestic violence, human trafficking, women's empowerment and more); persons with disabilities; minorities and underserved communities; youth and children's groups; the business community; and media. Many of these groups already play watchdog roles and all face real problems with the justice system throughout the country.

**Selection of organizations considered for individual meetings/consultations:** The selection process was based on the experience and level of impact on the communities within the identified CSOs and NGOs. The experience of prior USAID and EU funded projects was considered as was the outcome of the STC training needs assessment completed earlier in the calendar year. Also taken into account was the geographic coverage for both the organizations and the projects and advocacy/activism they have previously implemented. The following are the grassroots organizations that participated in individual meetings/consultations, as per field of expertise:

- VATRA, which represents issues related to the trafficking of human beings and leads a coalition composed of four shelters throughout Albania;
- AMCHAM (the American Chamber of Commerce in Albania), which represents issues of concern to the business community;
- BKTF (Together Against Children Trafficking), a formal coalition composed of 16 grassroots organizations, with broad geographic coverage and work experience on different issues concerning children; and the Centre of Integrated Legal and Services and Practices, which represents children's rights issues;
- ADRF (Albania Disability Rights Foundation), which represents issues related to people with disabilities;

- AWEN (Albanian Women Empowerment Network), composed of 7 organizations, located respectively in Saranda, Dibër, Shkodër, Vlorë, Elbasan, Tirana, Durrës, and Pogradec; the former together with Women for Democracy Network both address women's rights issues;
- Balkan Youth Link Organization, which represents youth issues;
- IRCA (Institute of Romani Culture in Albania), which addresses minority rights issues;
- Eye of the New Media, which represents issues related to the media.

In total, 18 consultative meetings with the above-mentioned organizations took place and have primarily served to identify the priority issues that will bring the CSOs into a Coalition. Each group/organization raised their own priority issues related to the malfunctioning of the judiciary institutions in Albania.

Access to justice was widely discussed to include the limited presence or complete lack of mechanisms that create adequate conditions to allow all individuals to participate effectively in the justice system. For example, persons with disabilities in Albania are entitled to equal access to justice and this is embedded in the Constitution and further defined in a number of laws, but is not well established in practice.

The business community as represented by AmCham raised issues concerning the malfunctioning of judicial institutions and the impact on economic development, sustainability of businesses and implementation and adherence to fair business practices and the impacts of all of these on the business community and the citizens of Albania. The need to have business community representatives participate in the drafting and review of critical laws was noted as limited or often missing entirely.

*"Unfortunately, in practice the access to justice has not been provided to the community of people with disabilities, due to a number of existing barriers. Starting with the physical inability of these persons to access the institutions of the justice system, such as, courts, attorneys' offices, notaries' offices, public administration offices, etc., this has not been addressed yet, and continues to be a priority concern for the community of people with disabilities,"*

- Mrs. Blerta Çani, Director of ADRF

*"There are delays in the execution of protection orders by the Bailiff Office. Under these circumstances, there is a need to monitoring the functioning of the Bailiff Service."*

- Mrs. Ines Xhelili, Executive Director of AWEN.

Critical issues were raised on behalf of victims and survivors of domestic violence who routinely are faced with significant delays in proceedings, enforcement and execution of protective orders, all of which can create circumstances in which victims and their family members are re-exposed to

violence and unsafe environments. The need for better coordination among justice institutions to ensure that judicial orders are timely and effectively served and enforced remains an issue. Additionally, provision of legal aid services remains critical, with the organizations noting that the system for free legal aid suffers from underfunding or a

complete lack of funding, a lack of qualified personnel and service providers, resulting in a non-functioning legal aid system.

All the issues raised from the individual meetings were summarized and will be used as a core document during the first roundtable of the coalition, planned for July 8, 2016.

**Cooperation between Justice for All Project and STC for the establishment of a Coalition and coordination regarding the grant-making process:** The stated main objective of the STC EU-funded CEFJSAJA Project is to contribute to the empowerment of civil society to actively participate and influence the proper functioning of the judiciary system in Albania. The project's activities are scheduled to be completed in 36-month period, starting in January 2016, with the first six months spent in preparations and the last six months dedicated to optimization of project achievements and results. The CEFJSAJA Project will: (i) provide grant support to Albanian CSOs that monitor the judiciary and work to expand and improve access to justice; (ii) provide technical assistance to these Albanian CSOs; and (iii) support the establishment of a national CSOs coalition focusing on the justice system reform and monitoring, as well as access to justice.

Justice for All Project goals are closely aligned with those of the STC CEFJSAJA Project, and in order to have a synergy in the achievement of common goals, the project put extensive effort to building bridges of communications between the two projects. Regular biweekly meetings were held between the two project teams in order to coordinate the efforts on the selection of the Coalition core group, as well as on designing the methodology and agenda of individual meetings with CSOs to identify the most important issues concerning the functioning of the judicial institutions. Minutes of each meeting were shared and agreed with CEFJSAJA team. This resulted in the agreement to closely cooperate and coordinate in establishing and supporting the Coalition during Justice for All Project's Years 1 and 2. Launching it jointly will greatly enhance the Coalition's standing and credibility as a watchdog and advocacy group and will better position the Coalition to interact effectively with public institutions and international actors.

This cooperation and coordination extends to the preparation of RFA's for grant-making. The projects actively and openly shared their individual grant making plans and associated documents, in order to avoid duplicate or overlapping grants and ensure the widest possible spectrum of grant activities possible. During the month of June 2016, CEFJSAJA team was worked to finalize their call for proposals, including the types of activities eligible for grant support for the CSOs, while Justice for All was actively in the process of drafting RFA for Monitoring and Assessment Program Regarding the Usage of Courtrooms and Digital Audio Recording.

**EXPECTED RESULT 2.2: CSOs become important actors in the justice reform process, bringing citizens' concerns to the attention of the judiciary and policy makers and exerting pressure for change.**

No activities to report under this Expected Result, pending establishment of the Coalition.



**EXPECTED RESULT 2.3:** CSOs provide concrete recommendations for improvements in the judiciary either through the legal reform process or on-the-ground reform process.

No activities to report under this Expected Result, pending establishment of the Coalition.

**EXPECTED RESULT 2.4:** Citizens' demand for improved justice delivery is increased.

Planning for making grants to citizens, including in cooperation with STC, is described above. In addition, EWMI prepared a GUC manual, which was approved by USAID. Grants will be made in future quarters.

**EXPECTED RESULT 2.5:** Civil society capacity to provide government oversight is increased.

No activities to report under this Expected Result, pending establishment of the Coalition and the start of the Project's grant-making activities.

### ***COMPONENT CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES***

Within this component, the Project team welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with the STC project, and is pleased with the coordination and collaboration on all activities thus far. Even without a formal agreement between the two projects, there is a perfect bridge of communication between both technical teams towards the achievement of a common goal. To date, no significant challenges have been faced within this component's activities.

### ***Steps for Next Quarter***

During the next quarter, the most important activities to be carried out are, as follows:

- ✓ Organize a Round Table Discussion on July 8 to agree on the first joint action(s) and the overall framework of cooperation under the Coalition;
- ✓ Publicly launch the Coalition - Following the Round Table Discussion described above, the Project will assist the Coalition's founding members to prepare the event that will also mark the public launch of the Coalition;
- ✓ Beginning in September 2016, the Project will release a Call for Expression of Interest (CFEI) for CSOs with some experience in watchdog activities, focusing on good governance and anti-corruption, including that in the justice system;
- ✓ Hold biweekly meetings to coordinate the support of both "Justice for All" and CEFJSAJA Projects to the newly established Coalition, as well as to coordinate both projects' support for grant-making process;
- ✓ Issue the 1<sup>st</sup> RFA for Citizens for Transparency Grants;
- ✓ Organize Informative Sessions with the CSOs regarding the RFAs, as well as participate in the information sessions organized by the CEFJSAJA Project.

### COMPONENT 3: INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

**EXPECTED RESULT 3.1:       The AJJ becomes a stronger investigative journalism organization capable of investigating highly complex national and transnational crimes.**

#### *AJJ Capacity Assessment and Work Plan*

Initial work under this component consisted of a series of meetings with the AJJ chair, board, and members to assess needs and capacity, leading to the conducting of a formal Organizational Capacity Self-Assessment Tool (OCSAT) and the provision of grant support and technical advice from an embedded investigative media advisor (IMA), to be provided by EWMI's subcontractor, IREX.

The Project held numerous meetings with AJJ representatives and members during the reporting period. Through the course of these meetings, the Project learned that the AJJ has suffered significantly since losing the financial support of JuST when that project ended. The AJJ no longer has an office or any paid professional staff, has had only minimal grant support from other donors, and has generated only a few articles. The AJJ board has stated that it expected significant financial support from the Project, far more than the Project (or USAID) had envisioned. At the same time, the AJJ was not receptive to the presence of the Project's IMA.

Nevertheless, the Project sought to move ahead, including by drafting the questionnaire that would serve as the basis for the OCSAT, and planning for an in-kind grant (since the AJJ did not have the capacity to manage funds directly) that would fund an AJJ office and equipment, some staff, and some reporting activities. The Project also identified potential office space and prepared job descriptions for needed staff. In addition, it was agreed that the Project would support an AJJ retreat and the conducting of the OCSAT, including field visits to all members. The field visits and the retreat were postponed when the IMA left the Project in June. Initial assessment findings include, in addition to the above, the following:

- There are approximately 11 active and eight "non-active" (for example no longer residing in Albania) members of the AJJ. The most active members are the six members of the executive board.
- In addition to the executive board, there is also a supervisory board, but their respective mandates and responsibilities are unclear. There is no editorial board; editing is conducted by individual members.
- The board has expressed its vision as an association defined as a professional network of journalists that come together to share experiences, and conduct networking, provide story/content development and support, participate in association sponsored trainings, when needed lobby on behalf of Albanian journalists individually and collectively, and to maintain the investigim.al website as an independent media outlet.
- The founding documents filed with the court need to be updated entirely as to membership, board members, objective and activities etc.
- The website needs upgrading.

- The quality of the AJJ members articles need improvement to attain maximum impact.

The Project has had disagreements with the AJJ concerning the level of funding, the role of the IMA and other project staff with the AJJ, the recruitment of AJJ staff, and other issues. As such, activities with the AJJ, including completion of the OCSAT and placement of a different IMA, are currently on hold pending discussions among the Project, AJJ and USAID.

**EXPECTED RESULT 3.2:           Corruption and other economic crimes are better exposed to the public.**

**EXPECTED RESULT 3.3:           The quality of investigative journalism is increased through the production of high-quality, documented, fact-based, cross-border, and national investigative publications.**

These results are expected to be attained through a grants program as well as through Expected result 3.1 and other activities. As described above, the GUC manual has been completed and grants will be provided in the next quarter.

**EXPECTED RESULT 3.4:           A more politically engaged and informed citizenry is promoted.**

Activities are not planned until early in Year Two.

**EXPECTED RESULT 3.5:           Independent and open media is strengthened.**

Activities are not planned until early in Year Two.

## **COMPONENT CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

As described above, the work with the AJJ has been a challenge.

### ***Steps for Next Quarter***

- Conclude an in-kind grant to the AJJ;
- Organize a retreat for all AJJ members to conduct the OCSAT and develop together with AJJ members a feasible roadmap for change management, including timeline and milestones;
- Field a new IMA who will enjoy the trust of the AJJ and be able to mentor its members on content that meets investigative reporting criteria on professional stories;
- Assist the AJJ in increasing its audience through more effective use of social media and other public outreach strategies;
- Assess investigative reporting in Albania, using IREX's Media Content Analysis Tool (MCAT);
- Conduct needs assessment for designing future trainings with journalists in the country; and

- Issue the Call for Proposal for investigative journalists and organize information sessions.